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NICARAGUA:
STUDIES ON THE MOSQUITO SHORE
IN 1892.

BY
COURTENAY DE KALB.

I.—HISTORICAL SKETCH.

Low-couched along the Caribbean Sea, with the Nicaraguan Andes rearing their forest-covered walls behind, reposes a narrow strip of sand and jungle which has borne the brunt of centuries of diplomatic juggling. Serving as the cat's-paw for Great Britain in her earlier schemes to menace Spain, and in her later efforts to capture the only possible Atlantic terminus of a trans-Nicaraguan ship-canal, Mosquitia was finally abandoned to the misery of an abnormal political status, involving independence without power and dependence without succor, when the risk of war with the United States rendered her more a source of danger than of profit to her former British "ally." Pampered and petted for generations, encouraged and aided by the English in depredations upon her Spanish neighbors, she now finds herself hampered by those she formerly despised, and whom she now hates bitterly. Discontent, vexation, enmity, are working as a ferment in the people of Mosquitia. It may come to nothing, and it may produce a state of things in which her sovereign, Nicaragua,



JAMES CUTHBERT, *Sec'y.*
CHAS. PATTERSON, *Pres't.*

GEO. HAYMAN, *Head-Man.*
ROBERT HENRY CLARENCE,
Chief of Mosquitia.

EDWARD MCCRAL, *Head-Man.*
J. W. CUTHBERT, *Att'y-Gen.*

would be bound to preserve the integrity of her domain,—by military repression if need be. None could blame her, and yet the plain necessities of the case would impel an infraction of that cunning piece of British diplomacy, the Treaty of Managua. The infraction would be equivalent to annulment, and that would revive all anterior claims, which means that a British protectorate over Greytown and its vicinity could be re-established in the name of the Mosquito Coast. Neither the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, nor any other, has aught to do with this aspect of the matter, as the history of Mosquitia and its entanglements will disclose.

By right of discovery the Mosquito Coast belonged to Spain, Columbus having formally taken possession, planting the standard of his Castilian sovereigns at the mouth of the Rio Tinto on August 17, 1502. He then rounded Cape Gracias á Dios, and made two landings, one at the Rio Grande, and the other in the neighborhood of Monkey Point, where he obtained the name of Cariari from the natives, which he gave to the entire region. He made no careful explorations. The low-lying land, singularly destitute of prominent landmarks, skirted by dangerous coral reefs and coral islands, offered few attractions to seekers of golden empires. The claim founded upon discovery was recognized, however, by a papal bull, based upon which a concession was granted to Diego de Nicuessa, whose expedition was wrecked at the mouth of the Wanks or Segovia river, just under the lee of Cape Gracias á Dios. From this period the coast attracted no attention until the rise of the buccaneers in the seventeenth century. Its numerous harbors, and wide lagoons, and the intri-

cate channels through its fringe of coral reefs, gave it fresh importance as a place of refuge, and as a convenient point from which to descend upon the Spanish Main, or to surprise the treasure ships from Cartagena. Cape Gracias, or more properly, the harbor at the mouth of the Wanks river, was the principal rendezvous of the buccaneers, and here also was the principal settlement and the home of the chieftain of the Mosquito Indians. From this piratical occupancy were derived the claims which England subsequently made to a protectorate over the coast. These claims, however, were the result of a gradual growth of English influence and of actual occupancy later on, so that in time her rights rested upon something better than flimsy pretence.

The buccaneers, perceiving the need of a resort where they would be welcome rather than tolerated from fear, used whatever urbanity and kindness of nature they possessed to render themselves beloved of the Indians. Trinkets, clothing, rum, and food were freely bestowed. They were taught the use of fire-arms, and assisted in their incursions upon the Spanish settlements north and south of them. Many of the pirates being Englishmen, the natives were early instructed to reverence the name and power of England, and the English language became familiar to them. When finally in 1655, Jamaica was seized for England under Admiral Blake with the co-operation of the buccaneers, the Mosquito fruit was ripe to fall into the English basket. Control was maintained through this piratical brotherhood until its final dissolution in 1688. The last contact of the Mosquito Indians with their free-booting friends was when they made their famous re-

treat from the Pacific Ocean, and descended the river Wanks, worn and wasted, seeking aid and protection from the very savages whom they had feasted and corrupted in the days of their strength and pride. Fearing to lose the advantage gained in Mosquitia, the chieftain of the tribe, who bore the name of Old Man, was taken to Jamaica in that year, and after affording infinite amusement to the profligate Duke of Albemarle, then governor of the island, was given what purported to be a commission as King of the Mosquitos, and a gold-laced cap, which he was told was his crown and emblem of authority. The document, which was long preserved among the Mosquitos, actually made the "King" a Governor General under England, and warned him to aid and succor all Englishmen visiting the coast. Subsequent visits were made by Mosquito chiefs to Jamaica, whence they returned with gifts and an ever-increasing notion of their own importance, which is probably the foundation of the legend current to-day among the Mosquito men, that they once held Jamaica in subjection and sent annually to levy tribute from the people of that island. Certain it is that a common Mosquito designation of Jamaicans is, "My Grandfather's Children," an appellation which is frequently thrown in the faces of the Jamaicans who now hold the reins of Mosquito government. This loose connection with England sufficed for all practical purposes until the tension between Great Britain and Spain in the early part of the eighteenth century prompted more definite relations. Vice Admiral Vernon wrote in 1740, "Great advantage might be made of the friendly disposition of this people (the Mos-

quitos) in case of war with Spain ; and it is not to be doubted but in case of a rupture the government will improve so fair an opportunity of advancing the interests of the British Nation and its colonies." In the same year Gov. Trelawney of Jamaica urged upon the Duke of Newcastle the advantages that might be gained from inciting the Mosquito Indians to undertake extensive depredations upon the Spanish settlements. Efforts were also made to secure the formal cession of the coast to England by the Mosquito " King," a business negotiated by Robert Hodgson, who acquired the title of superintendent. British settlements were made, and British authority was maintained by troops sent from Jamaica in 1744. Spain made a protest against this invasion in 1750, and Hodgson, acting under instructions from Trelawney, represented that as England held considerable commerce with the coast, she was merely keeping a force on hand to repress Indian hostilities against the Spaniards, which would interfere with the even course of trade. This clever artifice deceived for a time, but when the trick became apparent, and British oppression provoked an insurrection of the Indians, Gov. Knowles of Jamaica made a plain statement of the case to the government, and advised a relinquishment of all claims to the Mosquito Shore. Accordingly England agreed, among other things, in the Treaty of Paris in 1763, to demolish all fortifications on the Mosquito Shore and other parts of Spanish territory, recognizing as valid the Spanish claim founded upon the papal bull. Fresh incursions followed in spite of the Treaty of Paris, which led to the treaty of 1783, by which England agreed to abandon the Spanish Conti-

nent. England persisted in holding Mosquitia even after this, claiming that it was not part of the "Spanish Continent," but belonged in the "American Continent," a subtlety extinguished in the supplementary treaty she found it expedient to ratify in 1786, whereby she explicitly renounced all claims to dominion or control over the Mosquito Shore. The Indians continued under the nominal rule of native "Kings," acting in accordance with the advice of British traders who frequented the coast, until the uprising of the Spanish colonies in 1821, upon which England at once re-entered Mosquitia, taking a native chief to Belize and crowning him as "King" under the formal protection of Great Britain. The first "King" was soon killed in a drunken brawl, and within the two succeeding years two poor wretches were crowned and dethroned by the English, and a third, Robert Charles Frederick, was, on April 23, 1825, erected to carry out the will of England more perfectly. Failing to fulfil satisfactorily the office of puppet, he was carried off in a British war-ship to Belize, where he died. His son succeeded, obeyed his English masters, and thus a line of hereditary chiefs was established which continues in authority to the present day. From one of the deposed "Kings," George Frederick by name, Sir Gregor Macgregor, after his flight from Cartagena, obtained a worthless grant of land which he sold to English merchants for £16,000 in good sterling coin. The result was an attempt at colonization which met with disastrous failure and a wicked sacrifice of the lives of hundreds of simple colonists. Sir Gregor, undismayed, once more endeavored to evolve something out of Mosquitia in the form of an ideal republic to be

known as Indialand, an asylum for men of all races, and of all creeds, which should be a sort of paradise in the centre of the New World. Conventions were held, and an elaborate constitution and code of laws drawn up, which were unquestionably the best ever yet offered to this unfortunate country. While the dream of an ideal Indialand was fading from the minds of its visionary advocates, England was slowly tightening her grasp upon the coast. The star of annexation had once more risen and fixed the attention of British statesmen. Preparatory to such a move the question of territorial limits was pressed toward a settlement. In the vague uncertainties of the past no effort to define them had even been attempted. The first authentic statement of the territorial claims of the Mosquito Indians is found in a work entitled "The Mosquito Indian and his Golden River," written by one "M. W." in 1699, eleven years after the end of piratical control, and printed in 1746 "for Henry Lintot and John Osborn, at the Golden Ball in Paternoster Row." According to this traveller, who was an Englishman, the Mosquito territory began at Cape Cameron on the coast of what is now Honduras, and extended as far as 165 leagues south from Cape Gracias á Dios. This would end at Pearl Lagoon, thirty miles north of Bluefields, and 100 miles north of Greytown. The western limit was less closely marked, being a shifting skirmish line between the Mosquitos and the Alboawinneys, probably the tribe now known as Soomoos. Later the English laid claim to Bluefields, but it appears to have been an invasion by the British and their Mosquito "allies" of the territory formerly held by the Cookra Indians. From

1836, however, the limits were rapidly extended westward and southward until at length the entire coast was claimed as far south as the Rio San Juan del Norte, including that river as far west as the Machuca Rapids, and its port of Greytown, then known as San Juan de Nicaragua. Thos. Strangeways, K.G.C., had unofficially claimed the coast for Mosquitia from Cape Honduras to the Rio San Juan, as early as 1822. The growth of trade with the west coast of North and South America, and the westward march of empire in the United States, made the importance of Greytown manifest to British statesmen. Actual occupancy of this new territory was not made, however, until 1848. The inevitableness of the acquisition of California by the United States showed to Lord Palmerston that the time had come to seize the natural gateway to our western possessions. The move was accordingly made, in the name of the Mosquito "King," two English war vessels entering Greytown harbor in the month of January, 1848, tearing down the Nicaraguan flag, hoisting that of Mosquitia in its place, and assuming the reins of government. The Nicaraguans succeeded in expelling the intruders, but the English returned with reinforcements and overpowered the Nicaraguans, whereupon all offices were filled with Englishmen, and a Jamaican police force patrolled the town. At the same time the British attempted the seizure of the Island of Tigre, in the Gulf of Fonseca, the supposed western terminus of a Nicaraguan ship-canal, rendering their motives in their Mosquitian usurpations no longer able to be concealed.

The outcome of these performances was the negotiation of the famous Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, signed on

April 19, 1850, whereby the United States and Great Britain mutually agree that neither "will ever obtain or maintain for itself any exclusive control over the said ship-canal," nor occupy, fortify, or colonize, or assume or exercise any dominion over Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Mosquito Coast, nor any part of Central America, nor to make use of any protection afforded by either of the contracting parties to any Central American state to acquire such powers or privileges. There was nothing in the treaty relative to the Mosquitian invasion, and it in no wise terminated British control in the name of Mosquitia over the region adjacent to the Rio San Juan, although it was held to do so by our Department of State. The acts of this Anglo-Mosquitian government became so perversive of justice and order, more particularly in its infringement of the rights of American citizens, and in its interference with the Atlantic-Pacific Ship-Canal Company, an American organization, as to lead to Capt. Geo. A. Hollins, U. S. N., bombarding the town and driving out the English, on July 13, 1854, after failing to secure the protection of American property by the local authorities. The remaining population organized a government under a provisional constitution, which, under the terms of an armistice between Mosquitia and Nicaragua, held control of the port until the questions in dispute were finally settled by the Treaty of Managua in 1860.

It had been the general impression that the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty was to terminate English influence in the Mosquito Territory, which view was also held in Nicaragua. In answer to protests Sir H. Bulwer denied to Daniel Webster that the treaty was designed to

affect the position of Her Majesty on that coast, and the British minister to Central America, Frederick Chatfield, informed Nicaragua, on Aug. 16, 1850, that insistence upon her claims to the Mosquito shore "will not be much longer of any avail," that reliance upon "the protestations and assurances on the part of pretended friends" (viz.: Americans) is an incautious proceeding, and that "Nicaragua would do well to come to an understanding, without delay, with Great Britain, upon whose relations depend, not only the commerce and welfare of the state, but the probability of any positive measures being adopted for establishing an inter-oceanic communication across her territory, since London is the only place where sufficient capital and spirit of enterprise can be found for carrying out a project of such magnitude."

The same minister in December of the same year (1850) had "the honor to declare" to Nicaragua what were the boundaries of the Mosquito Coast, claiming the territory as far south as the Rio San Juan, and as far westward on that river as the Machuca Rapids. This series of complications coupled with British efforts to organize a government on the islands of Ruatan and Bonacca in the Bay of Honduras, led to a tedious diplomatic controversy, in the course of which Lord Clarendon justified British aggressions on the Mosquito Shore on the ground that the treaty of 1786 had been abrogated by the war between the contracting parties in 1789, regardless of the fact that in 1814 England had revived all treaties with Spain which had been operative prior to that war, and accused Mr. Buchanan furthermore of confounding the conditions of a sover-

eighty and a protectorate—the confusion very evidently arising from the difference between the American conception of a protectorate and the British practice under such conditions. Under pressure from the United States the Crampton-Webster Treaty was negotiated in 1852, wherein England tacitly renounced the contested protectorate, and surrendered to Nicaragua the Mosquito Coast, over which the Republic was to hold only a nominal sovereignty. The grounds of this treaty were not accepted by Nicaragua, so that in 1856 the Clarendon-Dallas Treaty was drawn up, containing provisions in many respects similar to those of the Treaty of Managua. This treaty, however, failed of ratification. Arbitration was then proposed, but rejected by the United States, which government finally discontinued such fruitless negotiations, threatening that the abrogation of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty might be determined upon later. The risk of losing the signal advantages secured to her under that treaty, and the imminent danger of war with the United States, decided England on treating at once with Nicaragua and Honduras for the relinquishment of the Mosquito Coast, whereby, at the same time, she would appear to be doing an act of simple magnanimity. The Treaty of Managua and the Treaty of Comayagua were the results, which were accepted by the United States as a satisfactory solution of the pending disagreements. The difference between the two treaties is not a little remarkable. The Honduranian portion of the Mosquito Coast was ceded absolutely and unequivocally to Honduras. The Nicaraguan portion was ceded to Nicaragua under terms whereby to this day England

may, upon some seeming, trivial infraction, re-assume the rôle of protector over the Coast. The conditions of the treaty are substantially these: Great Britain recognizes the sovereignty of Nicaragua over "the country hitherto occupied or claimed by the Mosquito Indians within the frontier of that Republic"; a district within the territory of the Republic is to be assigned to the Mosquito Indians, under the sovereignty of the Republic; the Mosquito Indians are to enjoy the right of self-government according to their own customs and laws, so far as these are not inconsistent with Nicaraguan sovereignty; the Republic is not to interfere in any matters of government in Mosquitia; the limits of the assigned district are to be, on the south the Rio Rama, on the west longitude $84^{\circ} 15'$ W. from Greenwich, on the north the Rio Hueso, on the east the shore line of the Caribbean Sea (*vide* Stieler's Atlas); the Mosquito Indians are to have the power by their own vote of annexation to Nicaragua, and of thereby becoming citizens of that Republic; Nicaragua is to pay a subvention of \$5,000 annually for ten years to Mosquitia for "the social improvement of the Mosquito Indians, and of providing for the maintenance of the authorities to be constituted" in accordance with the treaty; Greytown is to be constituted a free port, with certain privileges of local self-government. Certain duties were to be levied on goods entering at Greytown but destined for consumption within the Republic, such duties to be applied to the payment of the subvention to Mosquitia.

Difficulties under this treaty almost immediately arose. The subvention was paid promptly at first, and then withheld on the plea of illegal status of the new

chief, and of the government of Mosquitia being actually in the hands of foreigners, the latter objection being undoubtedly well founded. The true object of Nicaragua was, however, to force Mosquitia into annexation. Mosquitia was furthermore compelled to import all goods through the port of Greytown, upon which 10 per cent. duty was levied on the ground that the goods were intended for consumption "within the territory of the Republic." Nicaragua also undertook to grant privileges for exploiting the natural products of Mosquitia, and to require registration and license of German colonists desiring to settle on Great River in the assigned district. After a long controversy with England, it was agreed to submit the points in dispute to the arbitration of the Emperor of Austria, whose award was made in July, 1881. It is a document of the highest interest, of which only a brief résumé may be attempted. The sovereignty of Nicaragua was declared a limited one, Mosquitia being merely an inseparable, "political appendage of the main country." Nicaragua might not regulate the trade of the Mosquito Indians, nor levy import or export duties within the assigned district, which right belonged to the Mosquito government. Neither might Nicaragua grant concessions within the district. The collection of import or export duties at Greytown was forbidden. Mosquitia was allowed its own flag, with some emblem of Nicaraguan sovereignty attached. The subvention was to be paid in full, which was done at once.

The actual intention of Nicaragua in agreeing to pay this sum was to remunerate Mosquitia for the absolute sovereignty supposed to be acquired over the territory

adjacent to the Rio San Juan on the south and to the Rio Wanks on the north. She chose instead the pretence of magnanimity, attaching no conditions to her obligation to pay, so that she now holds this territory only through the faithful observance of all and every clause in the Treaty of Managua, any rupture of which might revive Mosquitia's former claims. England's right to interfere in behalf of the Mosquito Coast for the fulfilment of the treaty was expressly recognized by the Emperor of Austria, in these words: "England has an interest of its own in the fulfilment of these conditions stipulated in favor of those who were formerly under its protection, and therefore also a right of its own to insist upon the fulfilment of those promises as well as of all other clauses of the treaty."

The prospects for fresh interventions by Great Britain, and the outlook for future stability of government in Mosquitia, will best appear from a critical study of the country, its people, laws, and present relations with its nominal sovereign.

II.—DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY.

In the very title of the Mosquito shore, devoid of meaning though it be, lurks a suggestion of flat and miasmatic wastes which personal inspection speedily confirms. Save for Bragman's Bluff, whose whitish cliffs mark the limit of an eastward off-shoot of the Andean upheaval, and for Bluefields Bluff away to the south, which guards the entrance to one of the loveliest bays in Central America, the coast for leagues and leagues presents the same uninterrupted line of level verdure, like a low horizon cloud, as viewed from the sea,

ashen gray in color, here and there empurpled from the blending in the atmospheric blue of forest tints of red and brown. At intervals a little dip in this level line, scarcely discernible to the unpractised eye, shows where a river breaks through to the sea. Parallel with the shore, at distances varying from three to six miles and more, extends a chain of coral reefs and islands, dividing the beryl tinted shallow waters of the coast from that wondrous blue of the open Caribbean. The reefs often reveal themselves by foaming snow-white breakers. The islands, seldom more than a few hundred feet in length, are covered to the water's edge with groves of cocoanut palms, forming pictures ideally tropical, ideally beautiful. The reefs are not continuous, but are gradually becoming so, and new islands are forming by accumulations of detritus upon the submerged ledges, so that in time a new coast line will result, enclosing lagoons between it and the present shore. In this manner the existing coast line was developed, behind which lies a series of wide lagoons, having a still more ancient coast line for their western limit, beyond which again are found other lagoons and marshes that were once the open sea. The Mosquito shore is thus seen to owe its existence to a series of seaward growths, the outcome of a gradual continental uprising, assisted by the secretions of the coral insect. Close by the ocean there is little land available for industrial uses. Excepting occasional slightly elevated sandy beaches, suitable for cocoanut plantations, the whole coast is fronted by impenetrable mangrove swamps, a jungle of fantastic gnarled and twisted roots and branches, so serpent-like in form as to inspire involuntary shudders. Further

inland ancient marshes have become converted into wide savannas, affording pasturage for cattle, and these in turn give way to extensive forests of pitch pine, which are succeeded by the typical forests of the tropics which envelop the country westward to the mountains, sweeping up and beyond their summits into the central regions of Nicaragua.

In spite of such extensive areas of swamp and marsh, the climate has been proved by experience to be free from that deadly character, which is the bane of so large a part of the American Isthmus. All the conditions productive of malaria are present, but the ceaseless trade winds from the Atlantic and the Caribbean sweep away the miasmatic exhalations, and purify the air. It is a land blessed with abundant sunshine, but while overhead the sky is clear and blue, the vapors borne westward by the winds condense upon the mountains in towers of cloud which seem to topple over as night draws on, and roll back upon the coast in furious showers. To whatever cause it may be due, the Mosquito Shore is not unhealthy, and no authentic case of yellow fever has ever been reported throughout its length, an immunity due no doubt in part to the rigid quarantine regulations which have been maintained for decades.

As might be expected from the character of the coast, it possesses many harbors, which will assume an increasing importance with the growth of commerce. Each of the five great rivers of Mosquitia either empties into a lagoon before reaching the ocean, or else has a lagoon connected with it by navigable channels. These lagoons form perfect landlocked harbors, but

unfortunately the entrance to each and all is obstructed by shallow sand bars. With the exception of the Bluefields bar, the depth of water does not in any case exceed seven feet at high tide. Fortunately, on the other hand, when trade shall warrant the expense, an ample depth of water can be secured over these bars by systems of jetties, in each instance not longer than from one and a half to two miles, having naturally constricted channels behind them pouring down their floods with a velocity of from three to four miles an hour. The mangrove thickets growing to the very ocean's edge would lend themselves better than willows to fixing the jetty embankments, and by encroaching ever more and more upon the rivers they serve now to confine them within such narrow limits as to keep channels scoured out to a great distance inland, of sufficient depth to float large ocean-going ships. Beyond all question the finest harbor in Mosquitia, if not the best on the whole eastern coast of Central America, is that of Bluefields. Here is a natural depth of water of 16 feet, easy to be increased by dredging, or more permanently by jetties, with an enormous sheltered lagoon, furnishing abundant anchorage ground, with an elevated point, or bluff, on its eastern side, with thirty feet of water close up to the shore, admirable for wharfage facilities. Bluefields Lagoon is more than fifteen miles in length, and seven miles in width, a veritable inland sea. Its shores are high and well-adapted to agricultural pursuits, particularly to the raising of bananas. The culture of this fruit has already assumed great importance here, the banks of the Bluefields or Escondido River being lined for over

sixty miles with extensive plantations. The Bluefields River, the most important in the Mosquito Reserve, is navigable for vessels of eighteen feet draught for sixty miles from its mouth, and is actually ascended to that distance to-day by ships of the Morgan Line and of the Bluefields Banana Company, plying between this point and various ports in the United States. Another advantage of the port of Bluefields is that the high land, beginning at the very edge of deep water, extends uninterrupted by swamps and marshes back to the mountains, through which is a pass leading into the central plateau at San Miguelito on Lake Nicaragua, constituting a feasible route for a railroad. An American company has already begun the building of such a road, which certainly has many promising features.

The city of Bluefields, capital of the Mosquito Coast, is situated upon rising ground on the western side of the lagoon, seven miles distant from the anchorage at "the Bluff." It can not be reached by vessels drawing more than four feet of water, owing to bars which have formed in front of it, which circumstance greatly retards its commercial development. Various inconclusive explanations are offered for this unwise location of the town, but luckily it boasts no architectural extravagances which will impede a change of site, and a movement has recently gone so far as the acquisition of land on "the Bluff," upon which is to be built a new city. Common sense stamps a mark of approval on the project, and the pockets of the merchants which will fatten by this removal, through the saving of all lighterage charges, will determine its execution. The new site has many advantages. The Bluff is a rounded hill,

lengthened toward the north, somewhat less than half a mile in width, and about a hundred feet in height. On one side is the ocean, on the other the picturesque lagoon, with its rim of hills, and far to the southward the blue mountains of the Cordillera de Yolaina; as charming and as healthful a position for a city as could well be found. From a distance Bluefields presents the picture of a white town, peeping from masses of verdure along the sides of a hill which rises like a little mountain behind it. A little steam launch, or a sail boat, conveys you from the ship, past palm-covered islands in the lagoon, toward the town whose picturesqueness changes upon approach to a very plain assemblage of wooden structures, most of which stand well up from the ground upon posts which serve in lieu of foundations. There is not the slightest suggestion of Spanish influence anywhere discernible. It looks decidedly American; not unlike a Western mining town in many of its aspects. It bears marks of rapid growth, a sort of hasty, inconsequential development, suited to present emergencies, until it shall have time to build more permanently. There is just one street, a long, winding, hilly, rugged roadway, over bare outcropping reddish rocks. Dwellings, stores, and occasional palm-thatched huts are promiscuously intermingled. Now and then are seen attempts at gardens, some of which are luxuriant and beautiful, the richly-foliaged bread-fruit tree being conspicuous at every turn. The mission chapel, a spacious wooden tabernacle of large seating capacity, stands, surrounded by cocoanut palms, in a prominent situation overlooking the lagoon. Below it in a hollow, built over the water,

is the public market, where turtle and beef, cassava and fruits, are dispensed over none too cleanly counters. Just beyond is the government building, unpretentious, wooden, with a sign of state in its flag-staff and its solid cement stoop—very like a little Western court house. A few little lanes, not worthy the name of streets, straggle off from the main, or King Street, into that region locally known as “out back,” where the women wash clothes and spread them to dry on the grass beside Gunboat Creek, which insignificant streamlet loses its identity in the broad sheet of flood waters which sweeps down the hillside during the early morning showers. These uncontrollable floods are a sufficient vindication of the disuse of foundations in buildings here, but there seems to be no adequate explanation for the absence of those broad rambling piazzas, usually so common in southern countries, and which add such comfort to tropical existence. On the whole, however, in spite of much filth obnoxious to a Northerner, Bluefields may rightly claim to be one of the neatest, cleanest cities in tropical America, which compensates for a host of other deficiencies. Its population to-day numbers about 3500 souls, augmenting constantly, and destined to rapid increase upon the founding of the new city on “the Bluff.” It may easily become a more favorite resort for tourists than any of the West India Islands, when some one knowing the needs of this class of people shall build a comfortable hotel on “the Bluff,” and provide a wholesome cuisine. It is only five days steaming from New Orleans, the climate is propitious, and the scenery charming. In fact there is no business enterprise which would accom-

plish so much as this for the commercial advancement of the coast. Such an influx of well-to-do foreigners as would ensue might work advantages for the Mosquito Coast, similar to those which have resulted from a like cause in Florida.

About sixty miles up the Bluefields River is the little town of Rama, the centre of a large banana trade. The possession of this point is disputed by the Mosquito government and Nicaragua. The Nicaraguans now hold authority over it, and the question may involve a new arbitration if England responds to the protests of Mosquitia, although the matter depends in reality upon nothing more than the determination of a meridian. The exact demarcation of limits for the Mosquito Reservation will probably occasion numerous disputes. The adoption of *any* natural boundaries lying near those contemplated by the treaty, and proving upon investigation to be more convenient, was provided for in the Clarendon-Dallas convention, which failed of ratification. The Treaty of Managua allowed no such adjustment to geographical configuration of the territory, and there already seems to be grave doubt that the so-called rivers Rama and Hueso have any such definite character as will serve for the stipulated limits, in which case nothing short of a supplementary treaty will meet the exigency. The assumption of the Mosquito government to grant mining claims, at some distance in the interior towards the northern part of the Reserve, has recently filled the air with additional uncertainties, likely to lead to a critical tension.

North of Bluefields about thirty miles lies Pearl

Lagoon, receiving a large river of the same name. On the western shore of the lagoon is situated the pretty little town of Pearl City, almost as picturesque as its sister city on the south. Here is the home of royalty, the residence of the "King," or Chief, as the people are now more wisely calling him. The commercial importance of the place has decreased since the exhaustion of the mahogany forests on the river behind it. Another forty miles northward brings one to Rio Grande, where is situated a straggling town, consisting principally of palm-thatched huts, with a few frame residences and traders' shops. The mahogany cutting on the upper river brings no little business to the place, and rubber is still brought down in considerable quantities by the Indians. North of Rio Grande some twenty-five or thirty miles is Principulca, the most thriving of the small towns along the coast. Its aspect is not engaging, and it can never be made so. The ground is low, reclaimed from the mangrove swamps surrounding it. The Principulca River flows in front, the single irregular line of huts and flimsy frame structures following along the southern bank of the stream and curving around upon the beach which faces the Caribbean. Rubber has been its chief commercial dependence until recently, when discoveries of gold upon the head waters of the Principulca and its tributaries, have given such an impetus to trade that all the wholesale merchants of Bluefields are establishing branch houses here, and many new buildings are being erected. The actual centre of mining is at Cuicuina in Nicaraguan territory, but, as the only route of communication with the world is by way of the river to the

coast, Principulca becomes the centre of the mining excitement, and reaps the principal profits from it. From this point northwards are numerous little settlements, consisting chiefly of Indians and Sambos, of whom more anon. Two places among these deserve special mention. The first of these is the famous Schultz plantation, known as Wounta, which is an object lesson of value as showing what thrift and energy can accomplish, even on the Mosquito Shore. A grove of coconut palms four miles in length is something of itself to attract attention. A well-tended garden of many varieties of vegetables, flocks of fowls, pastures well-filled with cattle, bespeak provision for the natural wants of man, which commands a respect for the husbandman scarcely comprehensible outside of a country where people make shift to exist on turtles and plantains, and a few other ill-cooked substitutes for food, as is the case throughout nearly the whole of Mosquitia. The fact that Wounta Plantation boasts the finest house on the entire coast is likewise significant. The house, it is true, is the result of wealth, but the wealth, on the other hand, is the result of a thrifty utilization of the opportunities which are open to all. Whoever fares badly in such a virgin country as the Mosquito Shore has naught to blame but his own deliberate choice of ill instead of good. The second important place north of Principulca is that rather indefinite spot known as Wawa. At the mouth of the large river of this name is an unimportant settlement. On the shore of a beautiful lagoon a few miles farther back is the town of Caratá, the centre of some small rubber trade, and eighteen miles beyond this on the Wawa River is

“the saw-mill,” the only saw-mill between Panamá and the city of Truxillo in Honduras. Americans have started the enterprise, and, if it signifies anything to be driven to its full capacity with orders piling up ahead, the mill must be a profitable enterprise. The lumber is obtained from the forests of pine, which extend for miles between the swampy river margin and the interior savannas. The logs brought to mill are very large, often four feet in diameter at the butt. The trees are tall and straight, with coarse bark like our yellow pine, the foliage being in clumps at the ends of the branches, with three leaves in a whorl. They are heavy with pitch, surpassing in this respect the average of our Georgia pines, which often makes sawing difficult. Reports of gold discoveries in the vicinity of Wawa have drawn thither a number of American prospectors, but nothing is definitely known as yet regarding the outlook for mines in this region. The saw-mill, however, is attracting a population which will doubtless increase, especially as the wide savannas, so accessible here to deep water, are encouraging a cattle raising industry, which may become important within the next few years.

The trade of the Mosquito Coast has been growing in spite of the practical exhaustion of its rubber reserves, a circumstance due to the corresponding growth of the banana industry, and to the discoveries of gold. The mining excitement will probably work much more immediate harm than benefit, by drawing off men and money from enterprises of certain profit to one which is essentially precarious and treacherous. The expansion of credits in consequence of the hopes entertained

of large returns from the miners, who obtain advances upon this basis from the merchants, will result in failures and a serious depression of trade, should there ensue a shrinkage instead of the anticipated increase in the production from the gold washings—a result not unlikely to happen. As yet no quartz mines have been opened up, excepting “La Constancia,” which is worked in a small way by primitive methods, practically proving nothing. The “placer diggings” have in some instances yielded large quantities of gold, and about five hundred men are now engaged in working them. The output for 1891 was 5000 ounces of gold, running about 850 fine. Up to October, 1892, the amount exported within the year reached 8000 ounces. So far as definitely known these mines are all in Nicaraguan territory, ninety-five per cent. of the total product coming from the head waters of the Principulca River. Gold also comes from all of the other rivers, and the Bluefields River is said to have once produced considerable amounts. The banana industry up to the present time is confined to the Bluefields River, which exported in 1891 no less than 1,155,000 bunches, worth about \$231,000. Large bunches containing eight “hands” bring twenty cents on the spot, and six to seven “hand” bunches bring about thirteen cents. The value of the gold exported in 1891 being about \$85,000, it will be seen that bananas are more important to Mosquitia than the precious metals. Next in order of value to bananas is the rubber, of which 600,000 pounds were shipped in 1891, worth about \$210,000, paying a duty of one-half cent a pound. This is quoted in the market as “Nicaragua scrap,” and

"sheet." It is the product of the *Castilloa elastica*, a large, handsome tree belonging to the *Artocarpaceæ*, or bread-fruit family, entirely distinct from the euphorbiaceous seringas which furnish the rubber of the Amazon. The Castilloas grow in the highlands instead of the low marshy districts, so the rubber shipped from Mosquitia comes in fact largely from Nicaraguan territory. The Indians are the rubber gatherers, and in their endeavors to secure a large output they bleed the trees of sap too frequently, from which cause the rubber forests have been so far destroyed that it is only a question of a few years more when rubber exportations from this coast will cease. The governments of Nicaragua and Mosquitia could well afford to encourage the planting of rubber orchards to supplant the wild supply, by offering a bounty upon every pound produced in this way. The duties upon the increased importations of merchandise as a result of this increased exportation of rubber would more than reimburse the governments for this outlay. To be sure it takes ten years to mature a rubber tree, but—ten years roll quickly by, and the people have plenty of leisure.

Cocanuts and hides form additional articles of export, and an American firm is fast exhausting the mahogany forests along the rivers of Mosquitia. The possible productions of the country would constitute a tedious catalogue. It possesses all the advantages of other well watered tropical countries, without the disadvantages of climate which so often interfere with their development, yet there are few regions which have been so neglected by modern enterprise as this. The reason for this is not occult, or hard to find. It

lies partly with the people who live here, and partly with their peculiar government, for which latter they are not to blame.

III.—THE PEOPLE.

The Mosquito race has become so confused through an intermixture of blood for centuries, that it has lost its distinctive features, and has no existence to-day save in name alone. Class distinctions have, however, arisen, based upon the assumption of racial difference, resulting in what might be termed a Mosquito clan, cherishing antipathies productive of social discord and political evil. The characteristics of the Indian are still clearly manifest in this clan, sometimes predominating, but usually strongly modified by Caucasian and African features. The African admixture produces a type known as Sambos, which had its origin about the year 1650, when a large body of Negroes, most probably from the Island of Samba at the mouth of the Cassini river in Senegambia, were cast away on the coast of what is now Costa Rica, by the wrecking of a Dutch slave ship. These Sambas wandered northward as far as Cape Gracias á Dios, and succeeded in obtaining an allotment of land near Sandy Bay from the Mosquito Indians, with whom they speedily merged, adopting their language and customs. Long before this period white blood had entered through contact with the buccaneers, and upon the dissolution of this floating "Republic of Freebooters" in 1688, no less than one hundred of these rather undesirable colonists settled among the Indians. Constant accessions of whites and negroes from Jamaica have continued ever since, confusing the

mixture more and more, and largely swelling the numbers of those whose trace of the African classes them as Sambos.

Early records of the Mosquito Indians describe them as short in stature, usually dark in color, with finely cut features, and small straight noses, but these facial characteristics have changed to a decidedly negroid type. Their reputation for intelligence seems not to have been exaggerated, although it must be borne in mind that this quality instead of being repressed by servitude was encouraged by the peculiar relations which subsisted between them and their English allies. The language of these people was first reduced to grammatical principles by Alexander Henderson of Belize, who published a treatise upon it in New York in 1846. More recently Lucien Adam has published in Paris an exhaustive analysis of the language. It is fairly complex in structure, has a rich vocabulary, and is notably free from harsh gutturals. It is so generally spoken to-day that the Rev. G. Sieborger has translated the four Gospels into this dialect, although there is scarcely a man, woman, or child in the whole Reserve who cannot use the English language to some extent. Likewise there are few people who cannot speak the Indian tongue.

The Mosquito nation in the olden time was supposed to number about 10,000 souls. The present population of the Mosquito Reserve, which does not include the Mosquito tribe in Honduras, is probably about 7500, of which number upwards of 4000 are embraced within the Mosquito clan. The remaining 3500 are negroes, —mostly Jamaicans,—and whites, who reside chiefly in

the larger towns. Regard for personal appearance is one of the predominant traits of all classes on the coast. The women seldom appear on the streets other than tidily dressed, and at all public gatherings the neat aspect of the people is very striking. This spirit of neatness unfortunately stops at external show, failing usually to extend within the precincts of the home. Personal independence is insisted upon with an accompaniment of insolence, which is a great detriment to the progress of the people. This spirit is intensified by the ceaseless friction between the negroes and the Mosquitos, the influence of which is to abate the generous impulses of both classes. It is still further encouraged by the ease with which the problem of existence may be solved in a tropical country, which invariably leads to subsistence upon the scantiest and poorest fare, obtainable by a minimum of effort. Thus it happens that necessity for long-continued labor is almost unknown, and service of any sort is usually rendered only as a favor into which one must wheedle the people by infinite cajolery. It is not in appearance merely, but in fact, that the money consideration is the less powerful inducement. Imagination can easily picture the indolence and shiftlessness following naturally from this state of things. How much depravity results from it would be hard to say. There is certainly a strange confusion of moral sentiments, an outward observance of many of the Bible teachings of the missionaries, with a corruption of the inner life which it will take strong efforts on the part of those who have the cause at heart, or a radical change in the population, to extirpate, so deeply is it ingrained in all classes.

Theft is uncommon, and it must be said that the people possess a more than ordinarily keen sense of honor in the discharge of debts, while on the other hand they have no conception of the sanctity of ordinary promises, nor do they regard a contract as binding upon them in any respect. Deceit and falsehood are among their commonest vices. They seldom voluntarily offer assistance to their fellows, but will respond heartily to an appeal for aid. They are usually quiet and well-behaved, except when under the influence of liquor, to the abuse of which they are most pitifully addicted. There is not a merchant on the coast who is not engaged in the sale of intoxicants, which are working the moral ruin and physical degeneracy of the people. It is carried to such excesses that the procuring of liquor is the one object of existence for a large proportion of the population, and it may be said that drink is more directly responsible than any natural proclivities for the indisposition of the people to engage in productive labor. As it is, the work they prefer to do is the odd job that will quickly turn the odd penny with which to buy a glass of liquor. If the importation of liquor were absolutely prohibited, as was contemplated in the Clarendon-Dallas Treaty, it is almost certain that the increased productions of the coast would in a few years double the present volume of trade.

While the general standard of morals is certainly low enough, a still greater depth of depravity is reached in the relations of the family, where conjugal fidelity is practically unknown. So revolting to every sense of decency and rectitude are the monstrosities resulting

from this wide-spread laxity that no discussion of them in print may be attempted, and yet much may be said in palliation of this state of things. It is the direct result of the teachings and practice of the old time buccaneers and rascally adventurers and traders who for two hundred years held control of this coast. What may we expect where pirates, regarded as friends and as superior beings, train the simple savages to rent them women while in port at the price of "a hatchet apiece"; where settlers from Jamaica establish harems; where traders imitate and even out-pirate the pirates? How can we expect to quickly undo this moral damage by the influence and teachings of missionaries, when the Indians had been taught to believe that these pirates and traders were also Christians, and had even received baptism in the name of the Trinity at their hands? The difficulty is increased from the singular circumstance that these miscreants of old, amidst all their villainy and impiety, were sincerely *religious*, devoutly offering daily prayers, and even invoking God to aid them in their works of rapine, theft, and murder. What wonder that the savage mind became confused in matters of religion and morals? Much has been said against Spanish influence over the natives in the American colonies, but it will surely be hard to find a more deplorable condition of moral degradation than that which has been brought about through British domination in Mosquitia. Strange to say, no efforts at reformation were ever attempted by the English Church, although at one time it was proclaimed as the established Church of the Mosquito Coast. Its labors went no further than the main-

tenance of a chapel in Bluefields, in which the service was read on Sundays. In 1845, however, the Prussian Government despatched a commission to Mosquitia to examine and report upon the country with a view to colonization. The report was published in 1847, and proved to be a remarkable document, containing exhaustive and accurate accounts of the climate, physical peculiarities, and productions of the Mosquito Coast, and of its people, their language, customs, and beliefs. The scheme of colonization was soon lost sight of in the midst of more important political affairs, but the report awakened a spirit of missionary enterprise in many German hearts. Chief among those whose philanthropic natures were touched in this manner was Prince Schönburg Waldenburg, who earnestly recommended the Mosquito Reservation to the Moravian Church (*Unitas Fratrum*), as a field for missionary work. The Moravians were already established in many parts of the West Indies, having begun among the negroes of St. Thomas as early as 1732, and having founded stations in Jamaica in 1754, which had accomplished so important a work as to commend them to the sincere respect of the colonial government. Accordingly a reconnoitering visit was ordered in 1847, two Jamaican missionaries, the Revs. H. G. Pfeiffer and A. A. Reinke, being sent over. They bore a letter from Lord Palmerston, which secured them a gracious reception from the chief and the other Mosquitian officials. They were invited by the local authorities to establish mission stations, and were given important grants of land on Rama Island, and in the city of Bluefields. The commission strongly recommended the work to

the General Synod, alleging a partial knowledge and practice of Christian principles on the part of the inhabitants, confounded with a belief in Sukias or Witch Doctors, and the almost universal prevalence of "polygamy" (a mild way of putting it) and drunkenness. In the following year the Synod at Hernnhut decided to enter the new field, and the Rev. H. G. Pfeiffer, with two assistants, was appointed to carry the plan into effect. The work has grown steadily, but slowly. The total number of "adherents" is estimated at about 3400, but those who are familiar with what is termed "adherence" among the negroes in our own Southern States can judge what significance may be attached to it. Still, there is the force of a moral power working in the community, which has wrought many advantageous changes in the last forty years, and which will do more good in the years to come, aided by the influence of increasing immigration from the United States. There are now twelve mission stations in the Reserve, with nine ordained foreign workers, two native ordained workers, one foreign and twenty-one native lay-helpers, and ten foreign and fourteen native women assistants. The missionaries have labored under a great disadvantage in being of German origin, and having to acquire both the English and the Mosquito languages for use in their work ; and this detracts, perhaps, more than they are aware from their efficiency. Another detrimental circumstance is the close relation subsisting between the church and the government. The officials and the majority of the population speak of it as the "established" church, and religious observances have assumed in reality a formal character quite

in keeping with what one might expect in a state ecclesiastical institution, although there is actually no relation with the government, unless it may be that which is involved in government inspection of the mission schools. The missionary spirit is more clearly manifest in the stations maintained in the smaller, remoter villages. The missionaries are working with sincerity and earnestness, and enduring hardships and privations through which they can be sustained by nothing less than heroic faith and courage. It may be that they have done the best that could be under the circumstances, but there is observable here that same tendency to attach a large importance to small results, which is so common in missionary fields in all parts of the world.

Reformation of the people in morals is the thing now to be striven for. When a race has for centuries regarded the profession of Christianity as not inconsistent with corrupt practices in the common concerns of life, it is evident that church membership must amount to little, and that pulpit exhortation is unlikely to be of great avail. The most effective method will be to work the leaven of righteousness through the people by the education of the young. The Moravian Church in Mosquitia seems to realize this, and it now maintains ten schools, having an aggregate attendance of about 550 scholars. They are further aided in their efforts by the laws of the Reserve which make attendance at school compulsory, and impose fines upon parents who willingly absent their children. This gives a dignity to the schools unattainable where attendance is secured through persuasion, and as a reflex influence the things

taught acquire a larger measure of respect in the eyes of the old. Ability to read and write is common now among all classes, and the next generation will witness the entire extinction of illiteracy in the Mosquito Coast. The honor for this brilliant result unquestionably belongs to the Moravian missionaries, although it will be claimed by several parties. Nicaragua gave a subvention to Mosquitia, which was to be applied in part to educational matters, but it would be difficult to show that any of those moneys were ever applied in the manner intended. England has boasted her efforts to secure opportunities for the social and intellectual improvement of the Mosquito people. But England has done as much harm as good to Mosquitia, and Nicaragua strove to break up the Moravian movement in 1865 by the imposition of onerous duties upon the goods imported by the missionaries. In this attempt they were aided by the merchants of Mosquitia, who regarded with disfavor the trading tendencies of the church officials. It is not improbable that the good preachers were on the dangerous brink, over which fell so many of the early Catholic missionaries in Spanish America, of abusing the commercial opportunities which arose from trying to improve the natives by the introduction of some of the comforts of civilized existence. The check given to this traffic in Mosquitia was beneficial, and now there is much to hope for as an outcome of the excellent educational facilities which the missionaries are providing, aided by the inspiring influence of a body of noble, God-fearing men and women, setting a conspicuous example of the higher life before the eyes of all. The Mosquito Indians are

quick to learn. They are ready imitators. They aspire to emulate the types which enjoy the favor and respect of the majority. The negro we know to possess a spirit of progress and an ability to receive education, as the results in many of our Southern States have shown. These are the materials out of which Mosquitia's future must be evolved. If not the best in the world, they are far from being the worst, and with the suppression of those vices which now enervate and degrade them, they may easily rank among the superior peoples of Central and South America.

IV.

THE GOVERNMENT AND LAWS.

It may readily be imagined that such a population as now controls the government of Mosquitia would fall into many difficulties in adjusting its legal enactments so as to meet the exigences of its own political existence without straining the narrow limits prescribed by the Treaty of Managua. Astute law-makers indeed must they be who could sail securely between the British Scylla and the Nicaraguan Charybdis which threaten their political safety on either side. Where wise and learned men would be troubled, it challenges no little admiration to observe how a simple and inexperienced people have by childlike caution, at the expense of many dangerous omissions, restrained themselves from overstepping their acknowledged jurisdiction. The entire political situation of the country is anomalous. Nicaragua possesses sovereignty over it, but is powerless to enact a single law affecting it. She has no control over Mosquitia except to restrict its

powers within the treaty limitations. She enjoys absolutely no revenue from this territory which is part of her sovereign soil, except such as may accrue from the sale of postage stamps. Mosquitia enjoys the right of self-government to the last detail, except where there might be involved the exercise of sovereign power. The Emperor of Austria struggled to compose the contradictions of this paradox, and was forced to rudely cut the Gordian knot and award that a non-sovereign portion of an independent state might regulate its foreign commerce and impose duties as it pleased. More than this; perhaps the most singular anomaly of all is found in the circumstance that the inhabitants of Mosquitia are devoid of any legal citizenship. They are defined as "subjects" of Nicaragua, not, however, possessed of citizenship, which can only be acquired when the Mosquito Reserve shall voluntarily submit to absolute incorporation in the Republic. Mosquitia, on the other hand, has no power to grant citizenship, since this would involve the prerogative of exacting an oath of allegiance, which is strictly a sovereign right. Accordingly native birth, or residence for brief periods in the country, gives equal privileges, and disavowal of foreign citizenship is unnecessary for the holding of any office in the government of the Reserve. The only apparent exception is that educational or property qualifications, necessary in the case of most incumbents of office, are not required of those who are denominated "Mosquito Indians," this provision being made in deference to what is now practically a fiction that Mosquitia is "a reservation for the Indians."

The organization of the government is tripartite,

without a distinct separation, however, of the three functions. The executive is usually, but not necessarily, the hereditary Chief, who is elected for life, subject to impeachment. The legislative department consists of a General Council, and an Executive Council, enjoying powers which the title implies. The judicial functions of government are vested in four courts, inclusive of the extraordinary court of impeachment. The supreme court comprises in its jurisdiction the powers of appellate, equity, and surrogate courts. It has original jurisdiction over all cases involving large amounts of money or heavy penalties. Furthermore it is charged with entire control of education. Below the supreme court comes the local magistrate's court, which disposes of all petty civil and criminal cases, and controls the police machinery of the country. The magistrate, by virtue of his police authority, exercises executive functions, and thus he comes to be regarded with considerable awe and respect, and while his opportunities for petty tyranny are ample, he is usually the balance-wheel of the community, serving to hold in check those lawless outbursts which would be frequent but for the existence of an official invested with powers of summary and somewhat autocratic action. As an accessory to the magistrate's court is a sort of tribal tribunal, termed the court of arbitration, which has proved efficacious in a region where settlements are far apart and communication is slow and uncertain. In any civil case the plaintiff and defendant may, instead of carrying the matter into an ordinary court, each appoint an arbiter, and the two thus chosen are to appoint an umpire. This tribunal, being duly sworn before the mag-

istrate, is constituted a court of arbitration, with full powers of a court of justice. Its award is entered in the records of the magistrate's court, and no appeal from its decision is allowed, although an action may be brought against any member of the tribunal in case of fraud, which, if sustained, will set aside the finding of the court. Right of *habeas corpus* is secured by law, as also is trial by jury in criminal cases. Grand juries are abolished, indictments being made at the discretion of the magistrate upon information furnished him, bond being required, however, of the informer. Civil cases are adjudged without the intervention of a jury.

The manner of appointing the Chief, and the General Council, is another tribal feature in the working of the government. A public convention of the "head-men" of the Mosquitos and the mixed population recommends forty-three of its number who shall constitute the General Council. These are duly confirmed by the Chief, who has no power to make alterations. The General Council elects the Chief, and also appoints the members of the Executive Council. In the first public convention under the authority of the Treaty of Managua the old Chief acted as presiding officer until the General Council had been organized, when he was elected according to the constitution. The "head-men" are delegated by local conventions, which are seldom conducted with much formality. It will be seen that suffrage in the true sense of the word is not extended to the masses, although every man may, if he chooses, have a voice in the selection of the "head-men," from whom directly emanates all the power of the government. The system practically

results in suppression of the Indian element. The Indian, although naturally intelligent, naturally as capable as the negro, seems to have less political genius. The machinery of government impresses him as a mysterious something which he cannot comprehend, and which he hates because he feels the pressure of its iron heel when he disobeys its regulations. Instead of seeking to control it himself by constitutional means, he speculates as to methods for out-witting it, or for crushing it. The negroes, on the contrary, respond with enthusiasm to the call for conventions, participate in debate, which is only confusion and more mystery to the Indian, and so, when the sense of the meeting is taken, it is found to be wholly African. The Indian will even vote with the negro, being caught up by the only whirlwind of sentiment which has had force enough to impress the assemblage. As a result the Mosquito men are almost entirely excluded from power, and the government falls easily into the hands of the mixed population, as it is called, consisting chiefly of Jamaicans who still claim to be British subjects. The possession of this power by a single class operates further to make that class arrogant toward the Mosquitos, and the strife at times reaches a high tension.

The Mosquito government, being deprived of sovereignty, has no power to grant titles for land. The only freeholds in the country to-day are those which antedate the Treaty of Managua. Leases for ninety-nine years, with the privilege of extension, are granted instead of titles, and an annual board of land commissioners is given control of this department. The system possesses manifest advantages, as it removes at

one stroke every danger that may arise from faulty titles, and it secures the Indian against impoverishment. A mortgage may be executed against a leasehold, but if foreclosed it cannot alienate the property from the original lessee. The mortgage is satisfied out of the rents or products arising from the property for a certain number of years, after which the lessee resumes the full enjoyment of his leasehold. This rule applies likewise to judgments for debt obtained against the holder of a lease. As the Indian clings tenaciously to his home, and will not sell it, any attempts to dispossess him by encouraging extravagant debts are frustrated by this simple expedient. Another check upon the snares, in which foreign traders so often entangle the simple natives of distant lands, is provided in a law forbidding the transference of freeholds or leases to foreigners until they have resided five years in the country. Foreigners may, however, acquire leases from the government, or may lease freeholds. That the land laws of Mosquitia work smoothly is shown by the universal satisfaction with the system expressed on every side. The power to grant concessions is retained by the government of the Reserve, and while the laws are designed to cover various cases, the principle of the leasing system holds with reference to them also in the majority of instances.

Up to this point the advantages may seem to weigh heavily on the side of Mosquitia. She possesses a form of government which may easily be made liberal and representative. She regulates her foreign commerce, untrammelled by Nicaragua. She is master of her own domain with a single restriction, which has

proven a benefit. But there are other aspects of the situation less rosy of hue. In the first place she is powerless to control her own postal system. This is a sovereign right of Nicaragua, and as Nicaragua derives no other benefit from the postal service in Mosquitia than the revenue from stamps, she is utterly indifferent as to the granting of facilities for the transmission of mails. At Corn Island, once governed by Mosquitia, but now controlled by Nicaragua, the mail steamer must deliver the mails, delay three hours until the inhabitants have had time to answer their correspondence—a matter of importance to an isolated community—and obtain a certificate from the postmaster, on pain of a fine and the forfeit of her subsidy. No such protection of Mosquitia's interests is afforded by Nicaragua. Only one post office, with two branches, is maintained in the Reserve. The postmaster is under no constraint to forward letters to their destination at the smaller towns along the coast. Masters of schooners or steamers receive no compensation if they carry mails, and so the entire Reserve is at the mercy of these men, who take the trouble to go to the Bluefields post office for letters, only as a favor to the merchants whose freight they receive. This uncertainty of communication causes frequent losses to traders, amounting to thousands of dollars annually, and discourages the initiation of new enterprises at any distance from the principal port.

A fresh host of difficulties centres around the currency question. Mosquitia has struggled nobly to solve her problem, but she has found herself tied hand and foot by her old bug-bear, the Treaty of Managua.

Nicaragua insists, as she has a perfect right to do, upon the use of her own currency as the only circulating medium in the Reserve. This currency is the Peruvian "sol," whose value is ever fluctuating, and the paper money of the Republic, which is not readily convertible in a region destitute of banks. The "soles," furthermore, are of no value for remittances to the United States or Europe, so that gold is always at a high premium. At one time the government of the Reserve attempted to make United States and British gold the legal standard of values, but they were forced to recede from this position, and re-establish the "sol." Then they undertook to relieve the capital locked up in fluctuating "soles" by issuing treasury notes, based upon "soles" at $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent., receivable for all government debts, but were promptly called to account by Nicaragua for trespassing upon her sovereign prerogatives. The scheme had failed practically, owing to want of confidence, and had confused local finance, before Nicaragua interfered. Banks of issue are also prohibited by the Republic, and as no bank could exist on the local patronage alone, there is no possibility of rendering foreign exchange an easier matter until some radical alteration of the present regulations has been effected. It would be easy, and consistent with the treaty, for Nicaragua to charter a bank of issue for Mosquitia, with issues secured upon gold deposited in the Nicaraguan treasury, which would infuse new vitality into commercial life on the coast. Her unwillingness to do this, as well as her neglect of the postal system, are probably nothing more than additional examples of her efforts to coerce Mosquitia into annexation.

It would be possible to glean no little amusement from a study of some of the oddities of Mosquitian law, but such humor would meet its own reproof in the patent seriousness of these unskilled law-makers in their struggle to deal justly with their peculiar problems. Still it is necessary to give examples of their simplicity in order to demonstrate that one statute involving serious consequences is not exceptionally incongruous. Owing to certain difficulties with a former Chief, the Councils enacted a law in 1877 setting forth that "All persons giving false or evil advice to the Chief of the Mosquito Reservation . . . shall be liable to be tried for treason or misdemeanor, etc.," which might make it perilous to even converse on political affairs with His Excellency. There is a law prescribing penalties for those who "abuse the authorities"; and by a law of 1889 all the ports and rivers in the Mosquito Reservation are declared "free ports and rivers," which is flatly contradicted by the law providing for the collection of 5 per cent. on the invoices of all importations into Mosquitia, and by the law compelling all foreign vessels to "enter" at the port of Bluefields. It will now be less a surprise, although sufficiently astounding, to know that according to the constitution (Art. IV.) "the laws of England, as the same are now, or may hereafter be known and acknowledged, shall be, and the same are hereby made, the laws of the Municipal Authority* of the Mosquito Reservation, so far as the same can be made applicable to the present and future position, circumstances, and

* It should be stated that the government of the Reserve naturally chose to consider itself constituted a "municipality" under the Treaty of Managua.

form of authority, and when the same shall not be inconsistent and at variance with the sovereignty of Nicaragua." In accordance with this the supreme court is now using Serjeant Stephen's "Commentaries on the Laws of England," Butterworth's edition, 1890, as its standard. Expatiation upon the bewildering tangle resulting from the recognition of three legal authorities, emanating from three different nations, all which must be harmonized in their application to the common affairs of life, is a needless task. Doubtless the proverbial talents of the legal fraternity of the Quaker City would prove inadequate to ascertain "the law" on any given subject under such conditions. One can understand that resort to the court of arbitration would be preferable under all circumstances to falling into the meshes of the law in the ordinary courts, where the meshes are so complicated. But a court of arbitration is only adapted to the needs of a somewhat primitive community. The present conditions render it practically impossible to forecast the legal status of any enterprise in Mosquitia, and until this obstacle, the only serious one her own folly has imposed upon herself, shall have been removed, there will be great difficulty in inducing capital to enter the country. Dependence upon her own laws, imperfect as they may be, limited by Nicaraguan sovereignty, would be infinitely preferable to the existing indeterminate mixture.

V.

THE OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE.

The pulse of a new life is so manifestly quickening every portion of Spanish America, that we should nat-

urally expect to find its influence working changes on the Mosquito Coast. The influx of foreigners, though slow, has been gradually increasing within the past ten years. Many of these new accessions have been merchants and artisans from the United States, who have caused the introduction of some improvements and reforms which have modified the old conditions. The drift of emigrants from Jamaica, which for near two hundred years has been setting like an ocean current toward the Mosquito Shore, continues unabated. From this source little benefit is derived, but the newcomers bring with them a certain respect for the superficial gloss of civilization, and are readily brought into kindly temper toward reforms under the guidance of skilful leaders. They bring with them, moreover, uncompromising British prejudices, and a cordial antipathy toward those of Spanish blood. Thus the old fires of hatred, kindled in the early conflicts between the Spaniards and the Mosquito Indians, have been stirred through multiplying decades, and are each day brightened more and more. To the wealth of the community these people add almost nothing, but as they congregate chiefly in Bluefields, they gradually come more or less under the influence of the modern commercial movement, which represents the nearest approach to a healthy development the coast has yet experienced. Unfortunately the possibilities of this new movement are so narrowed by Mosquitia's political limitations, that a point in her progress beyond which she cannot pass will soon be reached, unless her powers are in some manner extended.

The present sluggish population will never of itself

acquire the inspiration of frugality and thrift. If developed in them it will come largely through the friction of competition with hard working emigrants, but nothing short of a rapidly expanding trade will induce such emigrants to seek their fortunes in the Mosquito Reserve. There is lacking, moreover, the spur of patriotism, incident upon citizenship, to impel the people to strive for national advancement. The future of the country is entirely indeterminate. Politically she is, as the old saying has it, "neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring." The influence of this is to dampen the ardor of many who would otherwise render valuable aid to the country's development. On every side one will hear men whose political services would promote the well-being of the commonwealth excusing their apathy on the ground that they intend to remove to other countries as soon as they have amassed a larger fortune, and many men and much money have thus been practically driven from the Reserve. They would rather adapt themselves to faulty laws for a time than undertake the thankless task, the almost hopeless task, of remedying defects which in large part are inherent in the political conditions established by treaty.

In spite of all her drawbacks Mosquitia possesses some conspicuous advantages which must not be overlooked. Deprivation of sovereign powers gives her complete immunity from disturbing foreign relations. She may neither send nor receive envoys, nor enter into any conventions with foreign governments. At the same time she has an implicit guarantee in the Treaty of Managua against being affected in any manner by political changes or disturbances in Nicaragua.

The simplicity of her government renders its maintenance inexpensive. The highest salary paid is one of 3000 "soles" to the chief, equivalent to about \$2100. The salaried officials are comparatively few, and the perquisites of office are small. Taxes are consequently low, the support of the government accruing from the five per cent. import duty, license fees for business ventures, rentals from leaseholds, and a two "soles" poll tax on all except Mosquito Indians. A third advantage lies in the fact that the whole population is free, and the system of "peonage," so inimical to progress in most Spanish American states, has, after a long struggle, been abolished. In 1883 an act was passed outlawing all debts not collected prior to March, 1884. To prevent a relapse of the old state of semi-slavery in which the traders were wont to keep the Indians, this act was amended to impress debtors, upon motion of creditors, into the service of the government at fifty cents a day, one half of that amount being paid to the creditor until the claim is satisfied. This is the last vestige of "peonage" in Mosquitia, and even this is not rigidly enforced. The labor problem is as trying on the Mosquito Coast as elsewhere. Laws have been enacted to mitigate its evils, but always without effect. After many futile expedients the merchants and agriculturists are still forced to procure laborers by infinite coaxing and persuasion, after the manner usual in dealing with primitive people. Enterprises of any magnitude are necessarily conducted with the aid of imported labor, and the government has adopted a regulation regarding such immigrants, which in principle is wise and highly meritorious. Contract laborers from

abroad require to be registered, to pay a small fee, and to give bond for their good behavior during a specified period. Such a law might with great advantage be extended to apply to all immigrants, which would save Mosquitia from the danger of adding further increments of undesirable Jamaicans to her already too shiftless and sluggish population. Indeed it is not at all improbable that some similar regulation might with important benefits be applied in other countries perplexed with immigration problems.

Nature has, moreover, blessed Mosquitia with the excellent harbor of Bluefields, and with deep water up the Bluefields river to a point where high land begins, reaching down from the mountains in the west. The project for building a railroad from this port across to San Miguelito on Lake Nicaragua has much to commend it, and if the road should be built it would unquestionably capture the carrying trade between the coast and the interior of Nicaragua. Greytown, as is perhaps not generally known, is to-day nothing more than an open roadstead, and the Rio San Juan del Norte is so obstructed by rapids as to render navigation both difficult and expensive. Bluefields has everything in her favor, and by establishing rail communication with San Miguelito she would become the great port of Nicaragua, in which competition with the San Juan route the Republic would be a gainer equally with the Reserve through the opening up to colonization of many hundreds of square miles of valuable virgin territory.

Both the Republic and the Reserve have also much to gain through a rearrangement of their mutual polit-

ical relations. Nicaragua has ever cherished the hope of acquiring full sovereignty over Mosquitia. To this end she has employed every artifice of persuasion and coercion to induce the people of the Mosquito Coast to exercise the right of absolute incorporation into the Republic accorded them by Article IV. of the Treaty of Managua. These efforts have not only been stoutly resisted, but they have tended to intensify the hostility which has always existed between the two sections. Although there may be no such thing as a Mosquitian patriotism, there is a bond, distinctly national, binding all classes together in the common anti-Spanish sentiment. If Nicaragua would dispassionately study the situation, she would perceive the utter hopelessness of effecting the annexation she so earnestly desires. That she should seek it is not unnatural, and that she can justify her pretensions on the ground of former Spanish sovereignty over the coast is incontrovertible. But she has lost her opportunity forever. Of that there can remain no doubt. The sooner she realizes it, and sets about improving the relations between herself and her nominal ward, the sooner will both enjoy a larger measure of happiness and prosperity. While much good might be attained by Nicaragua simply extending the powers of Mosquitia, in return for which she might be accorded certain compensatory advantages by the latter, it is evident that better results could be accomplished if Nicaragua should take the initiative in negotiating a new treaty with England to supersede the Treaty of Managua. What Nicaragua could rightly insist upon would be the absolute cession to her in perpetuity of the regions, formerly claimed by Mosquitia,

adjacent to the Rio San Juan del Norte on the south, and to the River Wanks on the north, relieving her from her present decidedly precarious tenure under the Treaty of Managua. In addition she has the strongest reasons for demanding such powers in Mosquitia as will protect her from the embarrassments and dangers attendant upon the authority now assumed by the government of the Reserve, whereby foreign shipping and foreign citizens may be subjected to disabilities and infringements of their rights, responsibility for which acts rests entirely upon Nicaragua as sovereign, while she is powerless to prevent them. An aggravated case of this nature has lately arisen in which United States shipping suffered, which if not already engaging the attention of this Government must do so shortly, perhaps with the result of reviving the Mosquito question between the United States and England. The constitution of Greytown as a free port is amply provided for in the Dickinson-Ayon Treaty of 1867, independently of that of Managua, although England's fears on this point might be set at rest by a separate convention between the three countries most deeply concerned. On behalf of Mosquitia, Nicaragua might, with advantage to all, establish by treaty the status of the Mosquito Indians, which practically means to-day the whole mixed population of the Mosquito Coast, on a basis similar to that of the Indians of the United States prior to 1871, for which she contended in presenting her case for arbitration of the Treaty of Managua in 1881. This would involve the right on the part of Nicaragua and Mosquitia of adjusting their mutual relations from time to time, as changing conditions might demand, by the

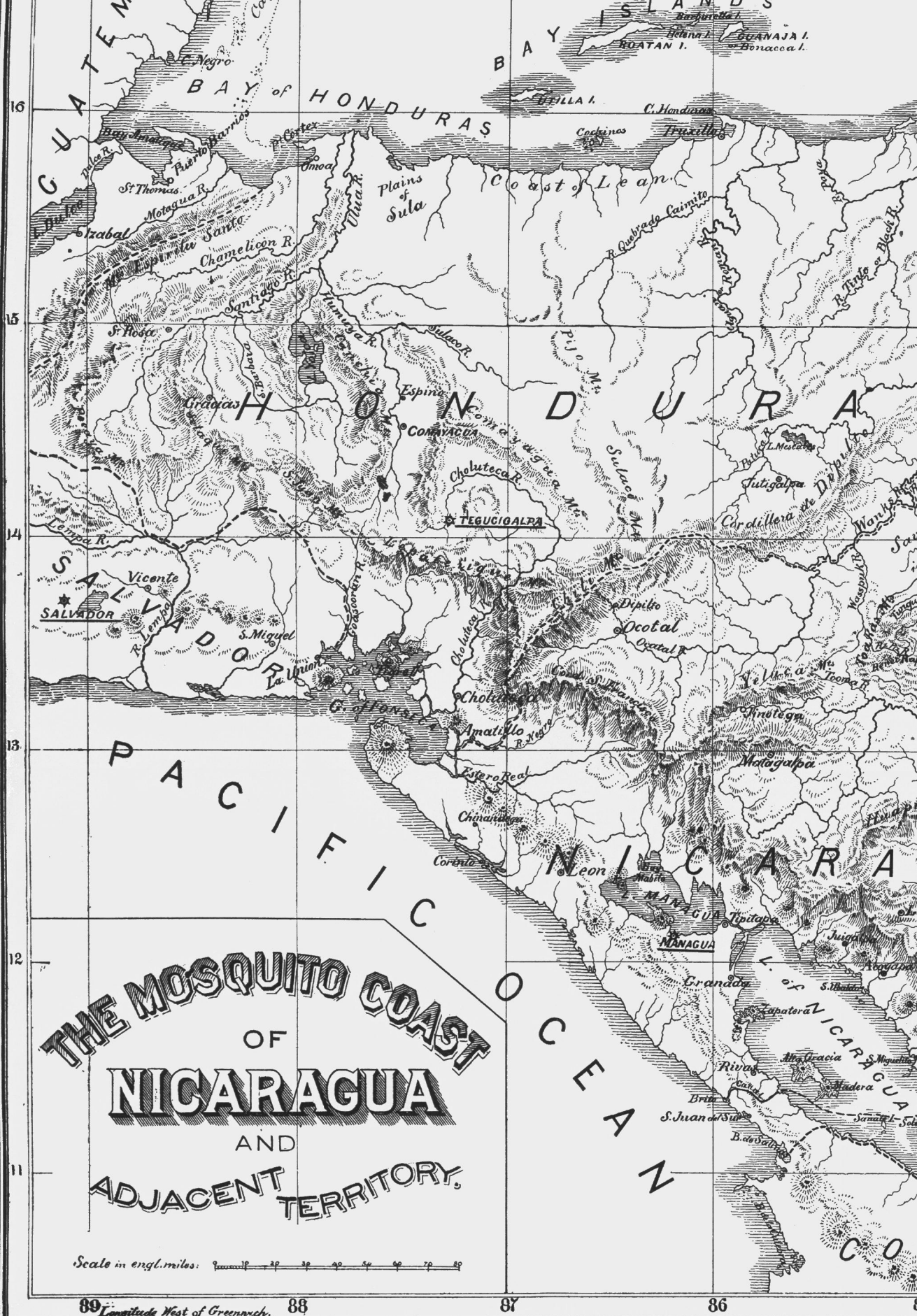
negotiation of treaties between themselves. It might also naturally lead to each maintaining an envoy or agent at the government of the other, which would promote a good understanding between them, and facilitate friendly commercial intercourse. The interests of both would also be subserved by the creation of a Mosquitian bank of issue, secured by gold deposits in the Nicaraguan treasury. The postal system of the Mosquito Coast should also be placed under local control so far as relates to the establishment of post-offices and mail routes.

The semi-national position thus secured to Mosquitia, with enlarged powers and closer and more cordial relations with Nicaragua, would lead to important results in her commercial and industrial condition. She would feel a strength within herself, an incentive to higher attainments, which are now impossible. Mosquitia has suffered the hardships of a mock independence for centuries. She has had no other history than that of a dupe in the hands of intriguing powers, who have deftly shorn her of her rights and her dignity in causing her to play a part not her own. At last, on the eve, as she supposed, of a signal aggrandizement in the acquisition of new territory and increased greatness, she found herself cast into a position of political inferiority little better than absolute subjection. The status then assigned her was regarded as merely temporary, but the avenue of relief is one which offers her no assurance of improvement. She fears, and with abundant reason, that the desire for annexation on the side of her nominal sovereign is conceived to a large extent in the ambition of politicians who regard the

people as for the government rather than the government as for the people. The temporary status has proven unsatisfactory. The opportunity is now open for Nicaragua to confirm her expressions of interest in the welfare of the Mosquito Coast by recasting this political anomaly in a better mould, in doing which she would equally consult her own advantage, and honor herself in the prosperity and new vitality she would bring to her long crippled dependency.







THE MOSQUITO COAST
OF
NICARAGUA
AND
ADJACENT
TERRITORY.

Scale in engl. miles: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

